

THE
FREEHOLDER'S SUPPLICATION
TO BOTH
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

[Price One Shilling.]



T H E
FREEHOLDER'S SUPPLICATION

TO BOTH
HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

" We've neither safety, unity, nor peace ;
" For the foundation's lost of common good :
" Justice is lame, as well as blind amongst us."

OTWAY'S Venice Preserv'd.

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THE
FREEHOLDER'S
SUPPLICATION.

IN the present alarming situation of this kingdom, it cannot seem surprizing, that any individual should address the supreme authority of the state in the emotions of his anxiety.

- The benefits of our national Constitution are

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as valuable to the meanest as to the greatest ;
 and both are equally concerned in its preservation. It is enough, then, that the writer is a Freeholder of Great Britain. As such, he offers his Supplication to the constitutional Guardians of this realm. As such, he earnestly intreats them to enter into some resolution, which may regain them the confidence of the people, and revive the spirits of their desponding and disappointed countrymen. The particular step, which would in his opinion be most conducive to that end, is simply this — *An Address from both Houses of Parliament to our gracious Sovereign, to remove the American Secretary from his post.* It is our happiness never to have seen a request from these Assemblies slighted by the throne. When other Bodies of

Men have framed petitions or remonstrances, in open defiance of some previous determination of the legislative Powers, they have been deservedly slighted for their unconstitutional proceeding: they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. Our Sovereign has expressed no wish more strongly, than that of gratifying the wishes of his subjects—when authenticated by the only evidence by which he can properly and legally distinguish them. Seeing, then, that the whole nation conspicuously agree in their sentiments on the subject of the American Secretary, the Freeholder ardently petitions to have those sentiments offered to the throne in the form of a Parliamentary Address; a method equally calculated to convince the public of the reality of representation, and to ingratiate our Sovereign with

with all his subjects by his ready compliance with the request.

It would be idle indeed to enter into a long proof of this universal wish of the Community. For the truth thereof I appeal to the sense and apprehension of every inhabitant of this island: these must effectually refute me, was the assertion a false one. Yet, since no cause ever wants an advocate, this advocate may probably exclaim on the injustice of convicting any one untried, and depriving him of an emolument, and his reputation into the bargain, without *legal* conviction. In answer to such advocate, it may be observed, that public employments are by no means any man's right; but that, on the other hand, it is the right of the public to have them properly administered; and that, when the public

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lic shew a disapprobation of the person in office, it is an undeniable argument for his removal. And, as to waiting for a regular inquiry, it is well known what long delays these businesses are attended with. Not many months ago, such inquiries being loudly called for, a shrewd Story appeared in a News-paper. A terrible fire was supposed at Wapping: the Common-Council of London were convened on the occasion; and much oratory was displayed in moving for inquiries into the state of the engines, buckets, &c.; till one wiser than the rest thought their immediate business was to extinguish the fire. Thus far the Story: but the application may certainly be extended a little farther than the author carried it. The same reason, which persuaded using instant efforts

for extinguishing the fire, would hold as strongly for securing the suspected *Incendiary*. To leave him the full power of daily repeating his diabolical practices would be more absurd, than setting on foot a tedious inquiry. Let it not be imagined, that a Freeholder can regard inquiries as unnecessary: he only allows, that there may exist reasons for postponing them; but the public safety will admit of no reason for continuing in his place a Ministerial Officer dangerous to his country.

To proceed with the advocate. He may dwell upon the circumstance of such an address being very unusual, though not totally unprecedented. The Freeholder takes it for granted, that such an address is not without precedent, because on the motion for the removal of Sir Robert Walpole,

pole, it was agreed on all sides, that no specific charge was absolutely necessary for the ground of that motion. It remains then only to be argued, whether the exigency of the times does not evidently require such a step to be taken. And here the advocate will have an hard task indeed: he will have to maintain his opinion against a series of positive facts, against the memories and feelings of every part of his audience.

One argument, more powerful than all the rest, has not been supposed. I mean, *the great detriment which might accrue to the Public from losing the talents and advice of so able a politician.* I say, this argument has not been supposed; for it would be difficult to find even a Lawyer ready to run the risk of making a numerous assembly laugh in his face.

Some of my brethren have got a strange notion, that arguments are never attended to, and that the will of the Minister determines every thing. Let a Minister, say they, call the most wilful blundering blockhead his own coadjutor, a Majority will deem the culprit not barely excuseable but meritorious. This is the hasty language of many of my dissatisfied brethren; but, for my own part, I conceive better hopes, founded on observation.

“ Though fall’n on evil days,

“ On evil days though fall’n, and evil tongues ;”
yet has the present Reign exhibited more instances of an independent spirit among Members of Parliament, than a whole preceding century. Questions of *revenue* have been decided against Administration. The number of the *unconnected*

*needed** daily increases: and may it continue increasing! The always-unintelligible distinctions of Whig and Tory are nearly annihilated; and seldom appear, except when party-writers, destitute of other argument, endeavour to revive them. From a set of men, unbiassed in their judgment, unprejudiced by party-denomination, unfettered by the chains of confederacy, much may be expected towards alleviating the fears,

* By *unconnected* are meant persons perfectly disengaged in their votes upon every question; which the Freeholder thinks the best proof of integrity, and is ready to maintain this opinion against the Author of *Thoughts on the Cause of the present Discontents*, whenever that author shall plainly assert the contrary. But the Freeholder cannot take an everlasting length of indecisive expressions for an opinion. He will freely declare his own judgment on the passage. He takes it for a specimen of parliamentary bigotry, alluding to the behaviour of particular persons well-known in certain circles, insignificant and nugatory when mysteriously obtruded on the public.

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and satisfying the well-grounded desires, of a people. With these men the Freeholder is the more importunate in proportion to his hopes, that they will not disappoint him of their assistance. He appeals to their coolest reflection, if they do not think the measure proposed likely to be beneficial. He conjures them, on that supposition, to make it manifest to the world, that the pure Love of our Country can produce as vigorous an activity, as the Call of Combination. He would animate them to shew, that they have not relinquished either their consequence or their trust, though deaf to the Heralds of systematic Opposition; and that one timely exertion can be more efficacious in controuling power, than eternal cavils.

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I have rested the propriety of the address solely on the manifest will of the People; the particulars of the charge I leave to those who have the materials in their hands. I have avoided every kind of insinuation against the private character of the Secretary. Suggestions of this sort can have little to do with public conduct; and whoever uses them contributes to the spreading of a plague most calamitous to society. Will the day never come, when this atrocious evil shall employ the wisdom of Parliament? Freest States have ever provided for the defence of Reputation. Sound Policy required that they should; lest the Sense of Shame, that strong incitement to virtue, should be totally eradicated. On this principle the Law of England punishes libels: and yet libels flourish in defiance of law, justice, and manners. It may be worth
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while to take a cursory view of the progress of this enormity. In the days of George the Second, the London Evening Post was the only constant vehicle of slander. This, though exceedingly malicious, was chiefly confined to bodies of men, or men in their public capacities. Nay, during Mr. Pitt's administration for five years together, there was hardly a libellous paragraph to be seen in a News-paper. In 1762, libels revived; but still their object was public measures, or at least persons in conspicuous public stations. In 1768, a set of shabby rascals (I can call them no better), assuming the lofty title of *Supporters of the Bill of Rights*, took up the trade of raking together invidious private anecdotes, and inserting them in the daily publications. As these dirty invectives were mostly

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blended

blended with party-squabbles, they were better received than they deserved to be. Their success produced the writer calling himself Junius; who, it must be owned, had the ability to discern the temper of his readers. He perceived that their minds were sufficiently poisoned to bear a treatment degrading to humanity. He was the first, perhaps, who avowedly appealed to all the malevolent passions of mankind, without any attempt towards convincing their reason, or affecting their sense of morality. In other times such writing must have confuted itself by the disgust it would have created in every reasonable being; and posterity, at the sight of these letters, will wonder with what race of men Junius could be popular. Many may have wrote for frail mortals; Junius alone for legions

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of Devils. From these beginnings a constant staple of scandal is established, and the profit of every News-paper enhanced to the publisher in proportion to its defamatory spirit. By these conveyances, always open to the ill-natured, the most harmless and domestic characters are exposed to scorn and contempt, and deprived of their social peace beyond the possibility of reparation; while the traducers feast upon the spoil, levy hush-money on those that will buy their quiet, and live luxuriously by the extortion. *These men prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession; and I said, then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed mine hands in innocency.*

Such being the evil, surely it is incumbent on Legislature to provide, that the punishment of
convicted

convicted libellers be more than adequate to the profit of libelling. If the law is already strong enough for the purpose (nor can the Freeholder be positive to the contrary), a due execution is the only thing wanting. Men, however innocent, are naturally unwilling to have scurrilous insinuations against themselves discussed in a Court of Judicature; yet they ought to consider, that neglecting to stand forth in these instances is inconsistent with the duty which every honest man owes to his country. The complaint of this calamity is almost universal; yet strangely true is it, that well-disposed persons cannot forbear even encouraging and assisting the evil. There are many who would shudder at the thought of being accessory in the slightest degree to murdering the reputation of an innocent;

cent; a guilt which they daily incur by being purchasers of the Morning Post. Let not any of these persons imagine, that their single discountenance would be immaterial; for it may happen to be multiplied by the example, and so swell into a fashion; till by degrees it may become nearly as infamous to be a purchaser as a writer of scandal.

Forgive me, my worthy Patrons and Protectors, if I have rambled from the subject I set out with. I return to your own walls, thence to ramble no more. There I look for success from the *Friends of the People*; from those who will attend to the business before them, without talking of themselves and their fathers, and their grandfathers; without interrupting the course of a debate by scurrility. Indeed, Ho-

nourable Gentlemen, it is a serious mortification to many an elector, big with the expectance of some salutary resolution resulting from your solemn councils, to read, that the precious moments of your august assembly had been totally taken up in your exercising the office of mediator between two disorderly disputants. It looks as if the honest Freeholders of Great Britain were no longer possessed of Legislative Representatives; but had elected a Jury for a Court of Honour, or Professors for an Academy of Compliments. But we sincerely hope, that on any future occasion such unruly beings shall suffer an immediate commitment: otherwise we are very apprehensive, that these seeming broils shall come to be fomented by collusion. Neither is it equally amusing to us, as the scene

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itself might be to the parties present, to read, how matters of real importance were eluded with an infinity of wit and humour, and a variety of pleasant stories. Nor can we well comprehend, why the ludicrous style of eloquence should be esteemed so necessary a talent in a Minister of State; why knowledge of business, reach of forethought, intense and extensive application, fidelity in declarations, consistency in conduct, may all be dispensed with, while a quickness in retort is indispensably required. The plain Freeholder understands nothing of this; but heartily prays, that the day will come, when the Genius of Parliament shall say to a Minister :

“ Reply not to me with a fool-born jest :

“ Presume not that I am the thing I was :

“ For heav’n doth know, so shall the world per-

“ ceive,

“ That I have turn’d away my former self :

“ So will I those that bore me company.

“ When thou dost hear I am as I have been,

“ Approach me ; and thou shalt be, as thou wast,

“ The tutor and the feeder of my riots.”

SHAKESPEARE, 2d Part of Hen. IV.

F I N I S.



1861

